

A Farewell to Methods?

Imperial ‘adventus-scenes’ and Interpretations of Roman Historical Reliefs

Christoph Klose

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

THIS paper draws back to my M.A. thesis which dealt with reverse representations of Roman Imperial coinage bearing the legend PROF(ECTIO) AVG(VSTI) and ADVENTVS (ADVENTVI / ADVENT) AVG(VSTI): two Roman rituals defining departure and return of the Roman Emperor.¹ Leaving aside the representations of *profectio* in this paper, I focus on the more spectacular case of *adventus*-scenes and attempt to connect these to questions of interpreting Roman state reliefs in a more general sense.

This inclusion is indicated anyway, because the typological canon of so-called Roman historical reliefs (as Roman state reliefs used to be called for a long term in research literature), like it exists or rather seems to exist paradigmatically in the cycle of the Aurelian panel reliefs partly re-used on the Arch of Constantine in Rome, refers to the most part to Latin slogans derived from reverse legends of Roman coinage. Accordingly two reliefs from the famous series of the so-called panels of Marcus Aurelius are interpreted as showing *profectio* and *adventus* and have been paraphrased accordingly (fig. 1. 2).² This leads to the primary focus of our analysis: the combination of image and text on Roman Imperial coins and their interpretation in modern scholarship, and the methodological approaches these interpretations are based upon.

¹*Der Kaiser als Sieger. Adventus- und Profectio-Darstellungen der römisch-kaiserzeitlichen Münzprägung* (accepted by Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, Fakultät für Kulturwissenschaften, Institut für Klassische Archäologie in April 2008).

²For *adventus* panels cf. for example: Hamberg 1945, 80–83 pl. 10; Brilliant 1963, 147–148 fig. 3.108; Ryberg 1967, 66–71 pl. 48; Angelicoussis 1984, 145 pl. 62,1; Hannestad 1986, 232–232 Abb. 140; Koeppel 1986, 70–72 fig. 38 no. 32. For *profectio* cf. Hamberg 1945, 83–85 pl. 11; Ryberg 1967, 28–37 pl. 22; Angelicoussis 1984, 151 pl. 66,1; Hannestad 1986, 229–230; Koeppel 1986, 56–58 fig. 31 no. 26.



Fig. 1: Aurelian *adventus*-panel (Rome, Arch of Constantine). Courtesy of Photothek, Winckelmann-Institut für Klassische Archäologie, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Anderson 2539).

Imperial issues bearing the legend ADVENTVS AVG(VSTI) form a prime basis from which to analyse methods applied to the interpretation of Roman state reliefs as well as the role assigned to coinage. This legend designates the successful and safe return of the emperor from campaigns or expeditions abroad and the emperor's festal entry into town.

Such entries comprised ceremonial rituals that most likely were based on Hellenistic traditions. Though in contrast to the Roman triumph there is no indication for early Roman roots of this particular ritual, it seems to have already been celebrated under Augustus in a highly developed form – at least, documentation of such celebrations in the written sources exists. According to these and later sources, the *adventus* celebrations consisted fundamentally of the following elements:³

1. The 'bringing in' of the emperor by official representatives of the citizenry under the rejoicing of the populace (sometimes referred to as *occursus*).
2. The changing of the emperor's clothes before the city gates, from military attire to civilian garb (usually referred to as *mutatio vestis*).
3. The actual entry of the Emperor and the welcoming deputation into the solemnly decorated city. This part is sometimes called *introitus* and was followed by sacrifices for the sake of the emperor's safe return, which were probably based on vows pledged in the correspondent ritual of the imperial departure, the so-called *profectio*. There does not seem to have been a fixed route for the ceremony of *adventus* as was the case for the Roman triumph, which of course has to do with the fact that the ritual of the imperial *adventus* was not restricted to Rome (though in the 1st and 2nd century AD most entries recorded in the sources are entries to the capital). According to the unanimous assessment of modern research, essential characteristics of the expectations towards the rulership of Roman emperors reached their peak in the ceremony of *adventus*: the emperor's regained presence was celebrated as the beneficent and vital foundation of the Roman Empire.

The great significance of the *adventus*-ritual is mirrored in Roman coinage. Starting in the early 2nd century AD (note the gap from the historical *adventus* under Augustus) and lasting until the mid of the 5th century AD, depicted scenes on Roman coin reverses are often been labelled ADVENTVS AVG(VSTI), or variations thereof. The coins provided with such legends show an extraordinary diversity of motifs; coins bearing such legends figure among the most common in Roman coinage.

³On Imperial entries in general cf.: Peterson 1929–1930, esp. 693–698; Alföldi 1934, 88–93; Kantorowicz 1944, 211–213; Hölscher 1967, 48–50; MacCormack 1972; MacCormack 1981, 17–89; Halfmann 1986, 143–148; Dufraigne 1994, 41–83. 89–92; Lehen 1997, 105–196; Bérenger 2009. Literary testimonia are collected in: Hey 1900, 837; Peterson 1929–1930, 683–692; Alföldi 1934, 89–93; Lehen 1997, 351–355.

Coinage labelled with the legend *ADVENTVS* was first issued under Trajan. These medallions show the Emperor on horseback holding lance in his right hand.⁴ He is preceded by a draped female personification bearing some attribute and followed by a figure naked or cuirassed with helmet and lance. In the background two more figures are depicted, at least one of them helmeted. The name of the female figure in front must remain open due to the fact that her attribute is not securely identifiable, although scholars have named her *abundantia* or *felicitas*, according to their interpretation of the object(s) held by her (e.g. cornucopia or caduceus). The three remaining figures are either interpreted as soldiers, or rather, as two soldiers in the background and one highlighted military figure, perhaps representing the entity of the Roman army (or most likely Mars, due to his alleged nudity). Thus the first scenes combined with the legend *ADVENTVS* show the mounted Emperor ready to attack in the centre of a military procession framed by a bracket of divine figures.

Under Trajan's successor Hadrian coinage bearing the *adventus*-legend was again minted, but combined with completely different motifs. This time the togate Emperor is clasping hands with an armed female figure either shown standing⁵ or seated on a heap of arms.⁶ This figure can be labelled on Roman coinage either as *ROMA* or *VIRTUS*.⁷ However, in this case the military character of the scene depicted is completely transferred to the personification only, while the emperor – wearing a toga – is shown in civilian garb. Through the motif of *dextrarum iunctio* emphasis is placed in these scenes on the attachment and closeness between the martially typified personification and the emperor shown as first citizen.



Fig. 2: Aurelian *profectio*-panel (Rome, Arch of Constantine). Courtesy of Photothek, Winckelmann-Institut für Klassische Archäologie, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (Anderson 2534).

⁴Gnecchi 1912a, 44 no. 1 pl. 21,6; Gnecchi 1912b, 3 no. 1 pl. 38,1; Kantorowicz 1944, 218 note 74 fig. 18; Brilliant 1963, 111 fig. 3, 16; Hölscher 1967, 56–57 note 328 pl. 6,5; Dufraigne 1994, 52 pl. 14,2.

⁵Standing: Hadrian, 134–138 (?) AD: *ADVENTVS AVG / ADVENTVS AVGVSTI* (denarius): BMCRE III, 315–316 no. 581–88 pl. 58,16–18; 119–138 AD: *ADVENTVS AVG / ADVENTVS AVGVSTI SC* (sestertius, dupondius, as): BMCRE III, 464–465 no. 1476–80 pl. 87,1; 478 no. 1569–1571 pl. 90,1. 4.

⁶Seated: Hadrian, 118 AD: *PONT MAX TR POT COS II ADVENTVS AVG SC* (sestertius, dupondius): BMCRE III, 401–402 no. 1120–24 pl. 76,4; Bernhart 1926, pl. 34,4; BMCRE III, 404–405 no. 1138–40 pl. 76,10. Hadrian, 134–138 (?) AD: *ADVENTVS AVG* (aureus): BMCRE III, 315 no. 580 pl. 58,15.

⁷Standing: Roma, e. g. Galba, 68/69 AD: *ROMA SC* (sestertius): BMCRE I, 321 no. 77–82 pl. 56,3. Virtus: e.g. Galba, 68/69 AD: *HONOS ET VIRTUS SC* (sestertius): RIC I, 254 no. 475–478 pl. 28. – Seated: Roma, e.g. Nero, 64–66 (?) AD: *ROMA SC* (sestertius): BMCRE I, 231–232 no. 168–172 pl. 43,1. First time labelled Virtus under Septimius Severus, 198–200 AD: *VIRTUS AVG* (aureus): BMCRE V, 179*; Schmidt-Dick 2002, 136 no. f5A/04 pl. 61. – Seated and without identifying legend e.g.: Hadrian, 125–128 (?) AD: *COS III* (denarius): BMCRE III, 286–287 no. 367–373 pl. 53,17–18. – More general on the ambiguous iconography of Roma and Virtus cf.: Di Filippo Balestrazzi 1997, esp. 1066–68; Schmidt-Dick 2002, 96–103 pl. 41–44 (Roma). Ganschow 1997, esp. 279–281; Schmidt-Dick 2002, 133–136 pl. 60–61 (Virtus).



Fig. 3: AE sestertius of Hadrian, AD 134–138. Obverse: laureate, draped bust r., HADR-ANVS AVG COS III PP. Reverse: Hadrian raising right hand to Italia who holds cornucopia and patera over flaming altar. ADVENTVI AVG ITALIAE, SC. KENNETH EDWIN DAY COLLECTION.
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Another famous series of *adventus*-coins was issued in Hadrian's reign (fig. 3).⁸ The coins of this series depict the Emperor facing the personification of a province or region, equipped with varying attributes. The personification is pouring a libation or dispersing incense over a burning altar, next to which sometimes a sacrificial victim is also indicated. The emperor's right arm is raised in the gesture of the so-called *dextra elata* – a gesture to which we will return later. Traditionally in these scenes, it is referred to as a gesture of greeting: it is seen as the emperor saying 'hello' to the province or region he is visiting, and which is sacrificing for the sake of his safe arrival.

Another type of *adventus*-scene was issued in the reign of Marcus Aurelius.⁹ Large bronze medallions portray a monumental landscape consisting of a temple façade to the left and a tall tower-like building in the centre of the background. Further in the front there is a block-shaped monument on the left, most likely a burning altar and a large arch to the right, on which are shown two gateways in perspective, defining it as

⁸Hadrian, 134–138 (?) AD: The following issues have been recorded in commonly accepted catalogues: ADVENTVI AVG AFRICAE (SC): aureus: BMCRE III, 339 no. 786 pl. 62,11; sestertius, dupondius, as: BMCRE III, 487–488 no. 1628–33 pl. 91,8–11; 488*.

ADVENTVI AVG ALEXANDRIAE (SC): aureus: BMCRE III, 339*; sestertius: Strack 1933, no. 742 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 488 no. 1634.

ADVENTVI AVG ARABIAE SC (sestertius, dupondius, as): Strack 1933, no. 744 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 489 no. 1635–37 pl. 91,12; BMCRE III, 489+; Brilliant 1963, 135 fig. 3, 76.

ADVENTVI AVG ASIAE SC (sestertius): Strack 1933, no. 745 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 490 no. 1638 pl. 92,1.

ADVENTVI AVG BITHYNIAE SC (sestertius): Strack 1933, no. 746–747 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 490 no. 1639–1640 pl. 92,2.

ADVENTVI AVG BRITANNIAE SC (sestertius): Toynbee 1934, pl. 3,16; BMCRE III, 490*.

ADVENTVI AVG CILICIAE SC (sestertius): Strack 1933, no. 748 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 490+.

ADVENTVI AVG GALLIAE SC (sestertius, dupondius, as): Strack 1933, no. 749 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 491 no. 1641–1644 pl. 91,13; 92,6.

ADVENTVI AVG HISPANIAE (SC): denarius: Strack 1933, no. 750 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 340 no. 787 pl. 62,12; sestertius, as: BMCRE III, 491–492 no. 1645–48 pl. 92,3. BMCRE III, 492*.

ADVENTVI AVG ITALIAE (SC): aureus: BMCRE III, 340 no. 788–92 pl. 62,13–14; sestertius, dupondius, as: Strack 1933, no. 751 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 492–493 no. 1649–1654 pl. 92,4.

ADVENTVI AVG IVDAEAE SC (sestertius, dupondius, as): Strack 1933, no. 752–55 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 493–494 no. 1655–1656. 1660–1661 pl. 91,14. 92,8.

Variation: ADVENTVI AVG IVDAEAE SC: sestertius, BMCRE III, 493 no. 1658 pl. 92,9.

ADVENTVI AVG MACEDONIAE SC (sestertius, dupondius, as): Strack 1933, no. 756 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 494*.

ADVENTVI AVG MAVRETANIAE SC (sestertius, dupondius, as): Strack 1933, no. 757–761 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 494–495 no. 1664–1669 pl. 91,16; 92,5. 7.

ADVENTVI AVG MOESIAE SC (sestertius): Strack 1933, no. 762 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 495*.

ADVENTVI AVG NORICI SC (sestertius): Strack 1933, no. 763; Toynbee 1934, pl. 5,22.

ADVENTVI AVG PARTHIAE SC: RIC II, 456*; BMCRE III, 496+ (doubtful).

ADVENTVI AVG PHRYGIAE SC (sestertius): Strack 1933, no. 764 pl. 13; BMCRE III, 496‡.

ADVENTVI AVG SICILIAE SC (sestertius): Strack 1933, no. 765; BMCRE III, 496 no. 1670 pl. 92,10.

ADVENTVI AVG THRACIAE SC (sestertius): Strack 1933, no. 766 pl. 13.

⁹Marcus Aurelius, 172/173 and 173/174 AD: ADVENTVS AVG IMP VI COS III (bronze medallion): Stuart-Jones 1906, 259–262 pl. 29,6; Gneccchi 1912b, 27 no. 2–3 pl. 59,5; Bernhart 1926, pl. 80,6; Wegner 1938, 180–181 fig. 10c; Degraasi 1939, 68 fig. 4; Kantorowicz 1944, 214 fig. 10; Castagnoli 1943–45, 137–140 fig. 1; Magi 1945, 100 fig. 68; Brilliant 1963, 147. 149 fig. 3.107; Hölscher 1967, 57. 64. 93 pl. 6,7; Koeppl 1969, 152–153 fig. 7; Banti 1985, 76–77 no. 5–7; Oetli 1988, 92 no. 83; Szaivert 1989, 59 no. 49 pl. 19,49; Dufraigne 1994, 55–56 pl. 15,1.

quadrifons. The notoriously difficult to pin down *porta triumphalis* of Rome has been tentatively recognized with this structure. In between all these buildings, the cuirassed emperor is shown in standing position, holding a trophy in his left and being crowned by Victory. To the right of the emperor two soldiers are advancing towards the gate, both holding standards. The design of these medallions bears some resemblance to the ADVENTVS-reverses of Trajan discussed above.

In both cases the emperor is forming the middle part of a procession and being singled out by special pictorial means, either through riding a horse and being framed by divine figures, or by his pose, a contrapposto-like position in the centre of an advancing procession. On the Aurelian medallion the emphasis on the emperor is further strengthened by him being crowned by Victory as well as by him bearing the most prestigious attribute: a trophy which assimilates the emperor with Romulus and his *spolia opima*.¹⁰ Besides this similarity there is a decisive difference between the Trajanic and Aurelian rendition of the theme, leaving aside most obvious details such as architecture or means of transport. While Trajan was displayed as ready to attack, Marcus Aurelius is now shown as the victorious commander in chief. Although the movement of the procession is further emphasised by its direction towards the gate, interpretations of its nature (moving into the city, moving out of it, or even just passing by some monuments that could be situated anywhere) are mere guesswork due to the composition of the picture.

Without pre-empting my case here, it is important to note that this Aurelian scene is absolutely singular on Roman coinage, but has nonetheless become the prime example for comparing the numismatic evidence of *adventus*-scenes with Roman historical reliefs. At this point it becomes manifest that, while the Aurelian *adventus*-medallion is willingly used to explain state reliefs,¹¹ there remains to be addressed the burning question as to why the vast majority of textually-labelled coinage reverses show scenes completely different from the Aurelian *adventus*-medallion?

In the coinage of Commodus as Caesar a new and long lasting motif for *adventus* was introduced (fig. 4).¹²



Fig. 4: AV aureus of Commodus, AD 175–176. Obverse: bare, draped, cuirassed bust of Commodus r., COMMODO CAES AVG FIL GERM SARM. Reverse: Commodus on horseback with arm outstretched, ADVENTVS CAES. Image from: ©Numismatica Ars Classica NAC AG, Auction 67, lot 172, reproduced with thanks.

¹⁰ Cf. for example: Hadrian, 134–138 (?) AD: ROMVLO CONDITORI (aureus, denarius): RIC II, 371 no. 266 pl. 14,280; BMCRE III, 329 no. 709–714 pl. 61,2–3. Further references: Small 1994, 640–641 no. 4–14. Koeppl 1969, 152 with note 83 stresses iconographical similarities with Mars, but not with Romulus. Similar schemes interpreted as Mars e.g.: Trajan, 101/102 AD: PM TRP COS IIII PP (denarius): RIC II, 248 no. 52; BMCRE III, 43 no. 94–97 pl. 10,17. Further examples: Simon 1984, 527–528 no. 214–222.

¹¹ Cf. for example Hamberg 1945, 80; Magi 1945, 100; Brilliant 1963, 147; Ryberg 1967, 2–3. 70–71; Angelicoussis 1984, 151.

¹² Commodus as Caesar, 175 AD: ADVENTVS CAES (aureus): RIC III, 263 no. 604; BMCRE IV, 478 no. 641 pl. 66,6; Brilliant 1963, 142 fig. 3, 91; Calicó 2003a, 397 no. 2220. – BMCRE III, 457 no. 1433 and Robertson 1971, p. LXIV (both without figures) mention a Hadrianic dupondius bearing the legend ADVENTVS AVGVSTI COS III PP in the collection of L. A. Lawrence (London) that allegedly shows the mounted Emperor in the



Fig. 5: AV aureus of Septimius Severus. Obverse: laureate, draped bust r., L SEPT SEV PERT AVG IMP VIII. Reverse: Severus on horseback with arm raised, horse led by figure, ADVENTVI AVG FELICISSIMO. Image from: ©Freeman and Sear, auction 11 Lot 354, reproduced with thanks.

It portrays the emperor mounted on a trotting horse and completely extending his right arm in the fully developed gesture of *dextra elata*. From Commodus' reign onwards this scheme becomes the motif most frequently combined with the legend ADVENTVS, being in use to the middle of the 5th century AD.¹³

Thus in scholarship this motif has been seen as the stereotyped *adventus*-scheme.¹⁴ Some variations and extensions of this motif occur. Usually there is a higher emphasis on the military aspect than in the case of the Commodus coin, beginning with issues struck in the reign of Septimius Severus and his sons: the emperor is wearing cuirass and holding lance.¹⁵

The emperor's military ability can be further marked by adding captives to the feet of his advancing horse,¹⁶ or by adding further military personnel, as Virtus/Roma wear-

gesture of *dextra elata*. As no visual representation of this type exists and because of the lack of any further reference to this type (esp. in Strack 1933; RIC II and online databases), its existence appears to be rather doubtful, especially since the lacking SC in the exergue would rather call for a bronze medaillon than a dupondius. Therefore it would seem methodically inappropriate to take the doubtful reports of this type as evidence for an earlier initiation of the *dextra elata* motif in *adventus* issues.

¹³ Cf. Toynbee 1986, 109; Koeppel 1969, 183 note 225 as well as the list in Stutzinger 1983, 290 note 31: latest examples: gold multiple of Valentinianus II (388–392 AD, Trier): FELIX ADVENTVS AVG N: RIC IX, 30 no. 88 pl. 1,13. Even later gold medallion of Honorius (395–423 AD): ADVENTVS AVG: Gnechi 1912a, 39 no. 1 pl. 19,10. Latest recorded example: gold medallion of Marcianus (450–457 AD): ADVENTVS S D N AVG: Gnechi 1912a, 40 no. 1.

¹⁴ Cf. for example: Kantorowicz 1944, 215; Magi 1954–1955, 51–52; Koeppel 1969, 183; Halfmann 1986, 145.

¹⁵ Septimius Severus, 210/211 AD: ADVENTVS AVGVSTI (denarius): BMCRE V, 366 no. 50 pl. 54,8. Caracalla, 210–213 AD: ADVENTVS AVGVSTI (denarius): BMCRE V, 370*. Geta, 210–212 AD: ADVENTVS AVGVSTI (denarius): BMCRE V, 368 no. 63 pl. 54,15; Lanz 1996, no. 661. Elagabalus, 220–222 AD: ADVENTVS AVGVSTI: aureus: BMCRE V, 560 no. 195 pl. 89,5; Calicó 2003b, 523 no. 2985–86a; denarius: BMCRE V, 560 no. 196 pl. 89,6. Philippus Arabs, 244–249 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (sestertius): RIC IV,3, 89 no. 165; Robertson 1977, 222 no. 87 pl. 70,87. Philippus Arabs, 244–247 (?) AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (denarius, antoninianus): RIC IV,3, 71 no. 26a–b pl. 5,12. Philippus Arabs, 244–247 (?) AD (Antiochia): ADVENTVS AVGG (antoninianus): RIC IV,3, 78 no. 81. Herennius Etruscus as Caesar, 250/251 AD (Antiochia): ADVENTVS AVG (antoninianus): RIC IV,3, 140 no. 156. Trebonianus Gallus, 251–253 AD (Antiochia): ADVENTVS AVG (antoninianus): RIC IV,3, 167 no. 79 pl. 13,17. Valerianus I, 253–260 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (antoninianus): Göbl 2000, no. 8d pl. 1. Saloninus as Caesar, 258 (?) AD (Lugdunum): ADVENTVS AVGG (antoninianus): RIC V,1, 124 no. 6. Gallienus, 260–268 AD: ADVENTVS AVG (aureus): RIC V,1, 132 no. 22; Calicó 2003b, 514–515 no. 3459–3450; antoninianus: Göbl 2000, no. 337x–338x pl. 31. no. 377x–379x pl. 35. no. 656r pl. 52. Gallienus, 260–268 AD (Milan): ADVENTVS AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,1, 171 no. 463; Göbl 2000, no. 1026–1028 pl. 81. Aurelianus, 270–275 AD (Milan): ADVENTVS AVG (gold medallion, binio): Gnechi 1912a, 9 no. 1–2 pl. 3,9–11; Estiot 2004, 175 no. 418–420; RIC V,1, 266 no. 9 pl. 8,129 (Rome as mint given here); Robertson 1978, 119 no. 1 pl. 30,1 (given as aureus struck in mint of Rome). Carinus, 283–285 AD (Ticinum): ADVENTVS AVG (aureus): RIC V,2, 175 no. 294. – For later specimen cf. Stutzinger 1983, 290 note 31.

¹⁶ This motif is first combined with ADVENTVS in legend under Gallienus (260–268 AD, Siscia): ADVENTVS AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,1, 179 no. 551; Göbl 2000, no. 1422i pl. 104. Later, it has been frequently minted under Probus (276–282 AD): ADVENTVS AVG: aureus: RIC V,2, 31 no. 133; antoninianus: RIC V,2, 34–35 no. 154–159 pl. 2,4–5.

Probus, 276–282 AD: ADVENTVS PROBI AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,2, 35–36 no. 160–167. 276–282 AD (Lug-

ing amazons' garb and leading the emperor's horse, while holding a standard in her left (fig. 5).¹⁷ Other coins show Victory preceding the Emperor, while a cuirassed and heavily equipped male figure, perhaps Mars, is following behind, thus completely embedding the Emperor in the midst of a procession. Such processions can be enlarged by adding up further soldiers in the background thus putting supplementary emphasis on the martial theme (fig. 6).¹⁸

A further variation of the scheme is the exchange of the horses: from slowly trotting to swiftly galloping ones. That type is represented for example under the Severan emperors.¹⁹ The galloping horse and the Emperor's wind-blown cloak denote the Imperial virtue *celeritas*, a prominent feature in later Roman panegyrics.²⁰ In modern scholarship the emperor on horseback with raised right arm alone or being escorted by military personnel is uniformly described and interpreted as raising his arm in a gesture of greeting.²¹

dunum): ADVENTUS PROBI AVG: aureus: RIC V,2, 20 no. 2; antoninianus: RIC V,2, 22 no. 19-20; 26 no. 63-64 pl. 1,2.

Probus, 276-282 AD (Siscia): ADVENTVS AVGVSTI (antoninianus): RIC V,2, 84 no. 631 pl. 4,9.

Probus, 276-282 AD (Siscia): ADVENTVS PROBI AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,2, 85 no. 632-636 pl. 3,13.

Probus, 276-282 AD (Serdica): ADVENTVS PROBI AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,2, 109 no. 836-837.

Probus, 276-282 AD (Cyzikos): ADVENTVS PROBI AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,2, 116-117 no. 903-904; Robertson 1978, 197 no. 311-312 pl. 47.

¹⁷ Septimius Severus, 196/197 AD: ADVENTVI AVG FELICISSIMO (SC): aureus: BMCRE V, 45 no. 150 pl. 9, 7; sestertius, as: BMCRE V, 147 no. 595-97; 149 no. 607 pl. 26,1; Bergemann 1990, 181 no. M175 pl. 93i; Calicó 2003b, 435 no. 2426-2427.

¹⁸ For the first time in the reign of Philip the Arab and Otacilia Severa, 244-249 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Toynbee 1986, 107 pl. 17,10; Robertson 1977, 227 no. 1-2 pl. 72,2.

Trebonianus Gallus, 251-253 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Banti 1987b, 133 no. 1.

Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus, 251-253 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Kubitschek 1909, 15 no. 136 pl. 9; Gneccchi 1912b, 103 no. 2 pl. 111 2; Gneccchi 1912c, 50 no. 8; Banti 1987b, 155 no. 2.

Volusianus, 251-253 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Gneccchi 1912b, 104 no. 1; Banti 1987b, 161 no. 1.

Valerianus I and Gallienus, 253-260 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Kubitschek 1909, 17 no. 146 pl. 10; Gneccchi 1912b, 105 no. 2 pl. 113,2; Gneccchi 1912c, 52 no. 5 pl. 154,9.

Gallienus, 253-260 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Gneccchi 1912b, 106 no. 4-5 pl. 113,7; Gneccchi 1912c, 54 no. 56.

Gallienus, 253-260 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Gneccchi 1912b, 107 no. 6 pl. 113.

Gallienus and Saloninus (or Valerianus II), 253-260 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (silver and bronze medallion), with the addition of two seated captives: Gneccchi 1912a, 55 no. 1 pl. 27,10; Gneccchi 1912b, 99-100 no. 3 pl. 109,10. cf. Toynbee 1986, 108 note 120.

Gallienus und Saloninus (or Valerianus II), 253-260 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Gneccchi 1912b, 111 no. 2 pl. 116,2. cf. Toynbee 1986, 108 note 118.

Gallienus and Salonina, 253-260 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Gneccchi 1912c, 59 no. 5 pl. 155, 9,11-12; Banti 1987b, 272 no. 1.

Claudius Gothicus, 268-270 AD: ADVENTVS AVGV[S...] (bronze medallion): Gneccchi 1912b, 112 no. 1 pl. 117,1.

Tacitus, 275/276 AD: ADVENTVS AVG (bronze medallion): Gneccchi 1912b, 114 no. 3-4 pl. 118,2-3; Hölscher 1967, pl. 6,6; Estiot 2004, 243 no. 1585 pl. I,54.

Probus, 276-282 AD: ADVENTVS AVG (bronze medallion): Kubitschek 1909, 20 no. 172 pl. 11; Gneccchi 1912b, 116 no. 6-9 pl. 119, 3-6. Latest examples from the beginning of the 4th century AD: cf. Toynbee 1986, 108-109 pl. 4,7 (bronze medallion of Maximianus, 303 (?) AD: ADVENTVS AVGG SC) and pl. 17, 11 (gold medallion of Constantinus I with personification wearing amazons' garb at the end of the procession, 313 (?) AD: FELIX ADVENTVS AVGG NN). cf. Koeppl 1969, 183 note 224.

¹⁹ Septimius Severus, 194 AD: ADVENTVI AVG PM TRP II COS II PP (bronze medallion): Kubitschek 1909, 9 no. 75 pl. 6; Gneccchi 1912b, 73 no. 2 pl. 92,7-8; Kantorowicz 1944, 215 fig. 13; Toynbee 1986, 107 pl. 43,6. Similar: Septimius Severus, 201-210 AD: ADVENT AVGG (denarius): BMCRE V, 213 no. 304-6 pl. 34,14; Bergemann 1990, 183 no. M203 pl. 94b.

²⁰ Cf. esp. Lolli 1999, for *celeritas principis* in the *panegyrici latini*.

²¹ Both in German and English scholarship, cf.: Toynbee 1986, 107-108; L'Orange 1953, 143 note 6; Magi 1954-1955, 51; Halfmann 1986, 143 (all: greeting). More specified interpretations are given by: Kantorowicz 1944, 215 (greeting and 'magic gesture'); Brilliant 1963, 173 (greeting and power); Hölscher 1967, 56-57 note 330



Fig. 6: Valerianus I and Gallienus, bronze medallion: ADVENTVS AVGG.
Image from: Kubitschek 1909, 17 no. 146 pl. 10.

Greetings that are – *nota bene* – meant for the faction welcoming the emperor which is not depicted on the coins. The methodology at use is easily explained. Movement is depicted by the horse and the procession. And as the legend designates this movement as ADVENTVS, the scene shown is believed to portray the return of the homecoming Emperor (*adventus*). But one might ask whether the movement depicted has necessarily to be interpreted in this way and whether the movement really is what counts most on these images, and what they were designed to express – as I would like to discuss at the end of this paper.

Along with the change to the horses the rendition of the emperor is also subject to iconographic variations. The emperor can be portrayed in movement of assault holding his lance horizontally and thus conveying resolution and operational readiness (fig. 7).²² He can even be depicted in the act of slaughtering enemies while trampling over a fallen opponent and about to spear another kneeling enemy in front of him.²³

The discussion of these examples suffices to prove that after the invention and introduction of the allegedly stereotyped scheme for *adventus* on Roman coinage in the late 2nd century AD, this motif is both being varied and exchanged by different iconographic formulations. Yet, even completely new motifs were still being produced and combined with the ADVENTVS-legend. For example the Emperor or the Emperors seated in elevated position inside a galley whose military aspect can be again further denoted by the addition of a set of standards.²⁴ Another motif was introduced by the emperors Numerianus and Carinus. Both emperors are depicted standing face to face and extending their right arms which are mutually holding a Victory, standing on globe, who is crowning both emperors alike. By stretching out their right arms together this scene is clearly aligned with the gesture of *dextrarum iunctio* and by this documenting the concord of

(‘prestigious greeting’); Koeppel 1969, 142 (greeting and ‘gesture of power’); Stutzinger 1983, 294 note 61 (greeting and ‘imperial authority’); Lehnen 1997, 149–156 (greeting and ‘imperial authority’).

²² Philip the Arab and Otacilia, 244–249 AD: ADVENT AVGG (silver medallion): Gnechi 1912a, 49 no. 1 pl. 24,8. Trebonianus Gallus and Volusian, 251–253 AD: ADVENTVS AVGG (bronze medallion): Gnechi 1912b, 103 no. 1 pl. 111,8; Banti 1987b, 155 no. 1.

²³ Aurelian, 270–275 AD: ADVENTVS AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,1, 270 no. 42–43; Robertson 1978, 119 no. 4 pl. 30; Estiot 2004, 157 no. 64–66. 69 pl. 3. Similar reverse is quoted for Caracalla but without any published depictions: 210–213 AD: ADVENTVI AVG (denarius): BMCRE V, 375a.

²⁴ Septimius Severus, 202 AD: ADVENTVS AVGVSTOR (aureus): RIC IV,1, 114 no. 178; BMCRE V, 230+; Calicó 2003b, 435 no. 2428–2429.

Caracalla, 202 AD: ADVENTVS AVGVSTOR (aureus): Lanz 1995, no. 699; Calicó 2003b, 475 no. 2660.

Caracalla, 202 AD: ADVENT AVGG (aureus): Hirsch 1910, no. 1161; RIC IV,1, 221 no. 57; BMCRE V, 232+; Calicó 2003b, 474–475. 2657–59.

Caracalla, 201–206 AD: ADVENT AVGG / ADVENT AVGVSTOR (denarius): RIC IV,1, 230 no. 120–121; BMCRE V, 205–206 no. 267–70 pl. 33,14–15; Schaaff 2003, 7 no. 54–55 pl. 47–49. A slightly different type has been identified in the Hunterian Coin Cabinet in Edinburgh, only. Here, no Emperor seems to be depicted in the galley, which is passing by a large monument comprising of a tall statue base and a standing male (?) figure on top holding some kind of attribute, cf. Marcus Aurelius, 178/179 (?) AD: ADVENTVS AVG SC (sestertius): Robertson 1971, 349 no. 250 pl. 96; Banti 1985, 77 no. 8.

both emperors reigning together. Simultaneously their innate victoriousness is stressed by the action of Victory.²⁵

These briefly discussed examples more or less form the range of motifs applied to the legend ADVENTVS on Roman Imperial coinage. Scholarship has tried to sort this diversity of motifs basically in an – as I think insufficient – attempt at bringing them into chronological order. The constant variation of motifs at use from Trajan to Marcus Aurelius is called an experimental phase (e.g. fig. 3), which was succeeded from Commodus onwards by the use of a new scheme becoming stereotyped: the emperor on horseback raising his right arm in a gesture of greeting (fig. 4. 5. 6).²⁶ The problem with this explanation is that although the allegedly stereotyped motif of *adventus* is admittedly the one most frequently applied, even in the time after Commodus it is far from being the only motif in use (e.g. fig. 7). Moreover such an interpretation leaves unexplained the scenes in use in the time before Commodus – or at best these are explained as failed attempts at finding a convincing iconographic formulation for *adventus*.



Fig. 7: Trebonianus Gallus and Volusianus, bronze medallion: ADVENTVS AVGG. Image from: Gnechi 1912b, 103 no. 1 pl. 111,8.

Further evidence casts doubt on this interpretation and the whole quest in modern research for a single and convincing motif for the iconographic rendition of *adventus*. There is, at first, the fact that even in the design of coins bearing the legend PROF(ECTIO), the correspondent ritual of *adventus*, time and again the same schemes as in use for *adventus* have been applied. This starts with the very first issue of *profectio*-coins in the reign of Trajan,²⁷ and continues to reappear on coin-reverses of the 2nd and 3rd century AD.²⁸

²⁵ Carinus, 283–285 AD (Cyzikos): ADVENTVS AVGG NN (aureus): RIC V,2, 177 no. 317 pl. 7,15; Hölscher 1967, pl. 2,12; Calicó 2003b, 740 no. 4342. Numerianus, 283/284 AD (Cyzikos): ADVENTVS AVGG NN (aureus): RIC V,2, 201 no. 462; Calicó 2003b, 733 no. 4300. – Somewhat similar are rare issues of REDITVS AVG: Florianus, 276 AD (Ticinum or Siscia): REDITVS AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,1, 358 no. 90–91; Estiot 2004, 382 pl. 100,540–541.

²⁶ Magi 1954–1955, 51–52; Cressedi 1958, 89; Hölscher 1967, 55–56.

²⁷ Mounted Emperor holding lance in his right in the center of a military procession (led by specially emphasized soldier or Mars looking back): Trajan, 112–117 AD: PROFECTIO AVG (aureus): RIC II, 262 no. 263 pl. 9,154; Strack 1931, 218 no. 208 pl. 3; BMCRE III, 102 no. 511 pl. 18,4; Hölscher 1967, pl. 6,8; Bergemann 1990, 177 no. M105 pl. 92g; AVGVSTI PROFECTIO (aureus): Strack 1931, 218 no. 239 pl. 3; BMCRE III, 103 no. 512 pl. 18,5; 108 no. 532, pl. 18,18; Robertson 1971, 27 no. 171 pl. 5; PROFECTIO AVG SC (sestertius): Strack 1931, 218 no. 449 pl. 8; BMCRE III, 215 no. 1015 pl. 40,10; Robertson 1971, 62 no. 372 pl. 14 – cf. supra note 4 on page 101 for ADVENTVS-issues of Trajan with same scheme of Emperor in midst of a procession led by a personification.

²⁸ Emperor with lance (as in Trajanic issues): Lucius Verus, 161/162 AD: TR P II COS II PROFECTIO AVG SC (sestertius): RIC III, 319 no. 1321–1323 pl. 12,249; BMCRE IV, 549 no. 1029–1030 pl. 74,16. Marcus Aurelius, 168/169 AD: COS III PROFECTIO AVG SC (sestertius): BMCRE IV, 607 no. 1349–1350 pl. 80,8; Banti 1985, 196 no. 244; Bergemann 1990, 179 no. M142 pl. 93c. Marc Aurel, 169/170 AD: COS III PROFECTIO AVG SC (sestertius): BMCRE IV, 614 no. 1371–75 pl. 81,11; Robertson 1971, 331 no. 135 pl. 90; Banti 1985, 197 no. 246–247; Szaivert 1989, no. 191 pl. 19,37. Commodus, 179 AD: IMP III COS II PP PROFECTIO AVG SC (sestertius): BMCRE IV, 680 no. 1707 pl. 90,3. – A sestertius of Caracalla, 208 AD, is reported: PONTIF TRP XI COS III PROF AVGG SC (sestertius): RIC IV,1, 283 no. 433; BMCRE V, 352*. Septimius Severus, 208 AD: PM TRP XVI PROF AVGG SC (sestertius, as): BMCRE V, 350 no. 854 pl. 51,10; Robertson 1977, 32 no. 158–159 pl. 11. Caracalla, 209 AD: PONTIF TRP XII PROF AVGG SC (sestertius): BMCRE V, 389 no. 173 pl. 56,12; RIC IV,1, 285 no. 445 pl. 14,17.



Fig. 8: AV aureus of Nero Claudius Drusus. Obverse: laureate head l., NERO CLAVDIVS DRVSVS GERMANICVS IMP. Reverse: arch surmounted by *tropaia*, equestrian scene in centre with rider's arm outstretched, DE GERMANIS. Image from: ©Ira & Larry Goldberg Coins Inc./Lyle Engleson, reproduced with thanks.

Moreover even the allegedly stereotyped scheme for *adventus*, the mounted Emperor in gesture of *dextra elata*, is combined with a PROF(ECTIO)-legend in various issues.²⁹ The next problem of the so-called typical *adventus*-iconography is that this motif was not originally introduced to Roman coinage labelled ADVENTVS – as coins dating back as far as the Late Republican period proof (fig. 8)³⁰, nor is the ADVENTVS-legend the only labelling applied to this supposedly typical *adventus*-motif on Roman coinage.

Caracalla, 216 AD: PROF AVG PONT M TRP XIX (sestertius) RIC IV,1, 306 (without no.) BMCRE V, 492 (without no.) existence or authenticity doubtful.

Septimius Severus, 208 AD: PM TR P XVI PROF AVGG (denarius): RIC IV,1, 120 no. 225a; BMCRE V, 270 no. 568 pl. 42,6.

Caracalla, 208 AD: PONTIF TRP XI COS III PROF (denarius): BMCRE V, 272 no. 573 pl. 42,10; Hommel 1961, 331–332 pl. 26,9.

Severus Alexander, 222–231 respectively 231–235 AD: PROPECTIO AVGVST SC (sestertius, as): RIC IV,2, 118 no. 596; 121 no. 640; BMCRE VI, 189 no. 748–750 pl. 26,750; 192 no. 775–776; Robertson 1977, 157 no. 143 pl. 47. – Similar coin reported for Gallic usurper Postumus: 259/260–268/269 AD (Lugdunum or Cologne): PROPECTIO AVGVSTI SC (sestertius): RIC V,2, 350 no. 155; Robertson 1978, S. XCIII.

Severus Alexander, 230/231 AD: PONTIF MAX TRP X COS III PP PROF AVG (bronze medallion): Gnechchi 1912b, 82 no. 23–24 pl. 99,9–10; 85 no. 9 pl. 101,7; Gnechchi 1912c, 43 no. 44; BMCRE VI, 192 no. 781 pl. 27,781; Hölscher 1967, pl. 6,9.

²⁹ Severus Alexander, 222–235 AD: PROPECTIO AVGVSTI (bronze medallion): Kubitschek 1909, 9 no. 88 pl. 6; Gnechchi 1912b, 85 no. 10 pl. 101,8; Gnechchi 1912c, 43 no. 45.

Severus Alexander, 222–231 respectively 231–235 AD: PROPECTIO AVGVSTI SC (as): RIC IV,2, 118 no. 595; 121 no. 639; BMCRE VI, 189 no. 751–752 pl. 25,751; Robertson 1977, 157 no. 144 pl. 47; Lanz 2003, no. 1016.

Gordian III, 242 (?) AD: PROPECTIO AVG (bronze medallion): Gnechchi 1912b, 91 no. 37; Hommel 1961, 329–330 pl. 26,8.

³⁰ A. Manlius, 80 BC: L SVLLA FELIX DIC (aureus), Crawford 1974, 397 no. 381, 1 pl. 48; Bergemann 1990, 170 no. M14 pl. 89k.

Claudius, 41–47 AD: DE GERMANIS (aureus, denarius): BMCRE I, 164 no. 2 pl. 31,2; 169 no. 36 pl. 31,25; 178–179 no. 99–103 pl. 33,13–14; RIC I, 122 no. 3; 123 no. 35 pl. 15; 125 no. 71–72 pl. 15; Giard 1988, 80–81 no. 4–6 pl. 19; Bergemann 1990, 172 no. M34. M.36. M42 pl. 90l.

Domitian, 95/96 AD: SC (sestertius), RIC II, 206 no. 414; BMCRE II, 406+; Castagnoli 1953, pl. 53,1; Carradice 1982, pl. 44,5–6; Bergemann 1990, 176 no. M96 pl. 92d.

Among the labels applied we find, apart from PROF(ECTIO) mentioned above³¹ VIRTVS especially.³² and VICTORIA (fig. 9)³³, but also SPES PVBLICA³⁴ and finally GLORIA ROMANORVM³⁵ in the Late Empire.³⁶

Lastly there remains the astonishing fact that the alleged stereotyped scheme of *adventus* is not the version represented on those Roman state reliefs assumed to display Imperial returns. Instead, clearly differing iconographic formulations occur on Roman historical reliefs, as for example in the Trajanic *adventus*-relief from the Arch of Constantine,³⁷ the two Flavian reliefs from the Palazzo della Cancelleria³⁸ or the Aurelian panel relief (fig. 1), but are nonetheless called *adventus* in modern research, for the most part since there seems to be one single comparison on Roman coinage: the Aurelian *adventus*-medallion, which also features a gate, as both the Trajanic and Aurelian Reliefs do.³⁹ So if a single proof of combination of image and inscription is enough for describing a work of the visual arts by an abbreviated slogan, one might call as well – using the same methodology – another Trajanic relief from the Arch of Constantine showing the mounted emperor victorious in bat-



Fig. 9: AE sestertertius of Gordian III. Obverse: laureate, draped and cuirassed bust r., IMP GORDIANVS PIVS FEL AVG. Reverse: Gordian mounted, raising hand and holding sceptre or staff, led by Victory carrying wreath. Image from: ©Dirty Old Coins, LLC, reproduced with thanks.

³¹Supra note 29 on the preceding page.

³²Septimius Severus, 201–210 (?) AD: VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM: Aur., RIC IV,1, 129 no. 374; BMCRE V, 224 no. 374 pl. 37,1; Bergemann 1990, 183 no. M207 pl. 94d; Calicó 2003b, 455 no. 2577–2578; Caracalla, 206–210 (?) AD: VIRTVS AVGVSTORVM (aureus): RIC IV,1, 237 no. 177; BMCRE V, 260*; Calicó 2003b, 500 no. 2845c–d. With kneeling opponent: Gallienus, 260–268 AD (Siscia): VIRTVS AVG (gold medallion, antoninianus): Göbl 2000, no. 1406 pl. 103; Lanz 2003, no. 1159 (frontcover). Probus, 276–282 AD (Serica): VIRTVS PROBI AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,2, 118 no. 913 pl. 5,11; Robertson 1978, 198 no. 321–322 pl. 47.

Probus, 276–282 AD (Cyzikos): VIRTVS PROBI AVG (antoninianus): RIC V,2, 114–115 no. 886–888 pl. 5,4; Robertson 1978, 195–196 no. 299. 308–309 pl. 46. 47.

³³Emperor alone: Gordian III, 238/239 (?) AD: (Antiochia): VICTORIA AVG: Ant., RIC IV,3, 35–36 no. 203–204. Embedded in a procession led by Victory: Gordian III, 243/244 AD: VICTORIA AVGVSTI SC (sestertius): RIC IV,3, 51 no. 325; Banti 1987a, 317 no. 118.

Gordian III, 238–244 AD: VICTORIA AVGVSTI (bronze medallion): Gnechchi 1912b, 93 no. 54–55 pl. 106,5–7; Banti 1987a, 318–319 no. 119–121.

Trajan Decius, 250/251 AD (Milan or Rome): VICTORIA GERMANICA (antoninianus): RIC IV,3, 125 no. 43 pl. 10,20; Robertson 1977, 241 no. 26 pl. 76.

³⁴Carus, 282/283 AD: SPES PVBLICA (denarius): RIC V,2, 140 no. 51–52.

Carus and Carinus, 283 AD: SPES PVBLICA (aureus): RIC V,2, 152 no. 135; Calicó 2003b, 732 no. 4297.

³⁵Cf. examples in Stutzinger 1983.

³⁶Additionally this motif is coined without any ‘descriptive’ legend, for example: Gordian III, 243/244 AD: PM TRP VI COS II PP (bronze medallion): Gnechchi 1912b, 90 no. 26 pl. 104,9; Kubitschek 1909, 11 no. 100 pl. 7; Banti 1987a, 297 no. 78.

³⁷Hamberg 1945, 56–63. 168–171 pl. 8; Koeppel 1985, 149–153. 173–175 fig. 13 no. 9, 1–16; Hannestad 1986, 168–170 fig. 108; Leander Touati 1987, 14–16 pl. 1. 5. 7, 1; 55, 4; Faust 2012, 16–17. 28–30 pl. 1,1.

³⁸The two reliefs found under the Palazzo della Cancelleria between 1937 and 1939 have both been associated with *adventus* among other suggestions, especially those which interpret one relief as *adventus* and the other as *profectio* (a fact that clearly marks scholarly preconceptions in regards of how to understand two reliefs from a single monument in their entirety). Cf. Hamberg 1945, 50–56; Magi 1945, esp. 98–115; Hölscher 1967, 53; Bergmann 1981; Koeppel 1984, 5–8. 29–33 fig. 11. 12 no. 7. 8; Hannestad 1986, 132–139 fig. 83–85.

³⁹For Cancelleria Relief A a gate has even been hypothetically reconstructed to make it fit to the assumed representation of *adventus*; cf. Magi 1945, 99 pl. D1; Koeppel 1984, 6.

the⁴⁰ ‘*adventus*’, as there is evidence on coins that this scheme of the Emperor defeating opponents was combined with the legend ADVENTVS.⁴¹

But this way of giving meaning to state art seems to be rather arbitrary, and scholarship therefore should wave good-bye to the application of such methodology of interpreting Roman state art. So, rather than identifying and interpreting Roman state art both on coins and so-called historical reliefs mainly by the use of pithy slogans, research would benefit from the attempt to understand the varying images in their own right.

Key to a new understanding of Roman state art seem to be approaches explicitly addressing the fundamentally different potential of image and text regarding their possible informative content. For it has been stated that there is a fundamental difference between the information that can be provided by an image as compared to that given by a text: whereas images convey a whole set of various possible implications and ideas at the same time, texts, especially slogans as found on coin legends, transmit precise messages that in the end will narrow the meaning of multifaceted images, such as we find especially in those complex set-piece compositions featuring the representation of Roman emperors.⁴² Coming back to *adventus*, this means that we should stop looking for a commonly used or convincing iconographic formula of the emperor’s return – there never existed one’, or at least its existence does not seem to have been the prime concern of those responsible for the combination of the varying motifs with a single legend. Instead, any interpretation suggested should be primarily based on the images and the various messages they convey. Talking about *adventus*, the central messages I propose would be the following.

1. Showing the Emperor as the successful commander in chief: therefore using the frequent gesture of the raised right arm not as a mere formula of greeting, but rather as a gesture expressing the emperor’s command, activity and control. If this gesture was to be understood as a mere gesture of arrival, it simply would not exist in scenes of Roman state art which clearly feature non-arrival contexts, such as *adlocutiones*.⁴³
2. Denoting the emperor’s support by the citizenry, his loyal troops as well as by divine force, signifying *concordia* and the legitimacy of his rule, an aspect that can also be transferred to those scenes depicting the mutual leadership of two reigning emperors.⁴⁴ In addition the scenes showing the emperor in company with divine figures assimilate him to the sphere of gods, stressing their benevolence towards the emperor’s good rulership.

⁴⁰Koeppel 1985, 149–153. 179–180 fig. 15 no. 9, 41–55; Hannestad 1986, 168–170 fig. 107; Leander Touati 1987, 21–24 pl. 3; Faust 2012, 12–13. 17–19. 28–30 pl. 2, 1.

⁴¹Aurelianus, 270–275 AD: ADVENTVS AVG (antoninianus): RIC V, 1, 270 no. 42–43; Robertson 1978, 119 no. 4 pl. 30; Estiot 2004, 157 no. 64–66. 69 pl. 3. Similar reverse is quoted for Caracalla but without any published depictions: 210–213 AD: ADVENTVI AVG (denarius): BMCRE V, 375a.

⁴²Cf. Muth 2006, (Roman coinage); Griebel 2013, esp. 14–15 (Roman state art).

⁴³Cf. already the discomfort of Hölcher 1967, 56–57. n330. For a new interpretation of scenes of Imperial address and related scenes cf. Griebel 2013, 81–100 (interpreted as an iconographic formula most apt to denote Imperial activity as well as the *consensus omnium* between the Emperor and the Roman people, and especially his troops).

⁴⁴Cf. supra note 25 on page 107.

3. Marking the emperor's military activity as victorious by, for example, adding Victory, captives or defeated enemies.
4. Accentuating the emperor by showing him – in nearly all scenes – mounted on horseback and thus standing out. The mounted position, of course, conveys movement, too, as do the issues which show the Emperor inside a galley.

Thus, in all the varying motifs combined with an ADVENTVS-legend we find elements central to the prestigious representation of Imperial rule. This visual evidence of the various *adventus*-scenes fits in well with the description of the ritual of Imperial entry as found in the ancient written sources. In these, the emperor is time and again referred to as saviour, benefactor, redeemer.⁴⁵ The recovered presence of the emperor is celebrated almost as the epiphany of a force guaranteeing the continuance of the Roman cause. By emphasising the accordance between aspects found in the written sources and the visual evidence of the *adventus*-scenes, I do not mean to create a nebulous group containing all the motifs found combined with the ADVENTVS-legend; rather, I would like to stress that all the diverse images chosen for being labelled ADVENTVS – and which have to be each interpreted in their own right – make eclectic but deliberate use of a set of ideas and messages inherent to the ritual of *adventus*. This might explain both why so many different motifs conveying differing messages were combined and why Roman Imperial coinage – once this started in the early 2nd century AD – was provided with legends referring to that particular ritual exceptionally often and for such a long period in time (lasting basically until to the fall of Rome).

What are the implications we can withdraw from these observations regarding the understanding of Roman state reliefs or Roman state art in general? First, there is no reason to assume that there ever was intention for finding and using one striking iconographic formula for Imperial entry. After all, there never existed only one singular iconographic rendition of *adventus* in Roman coinage, from which the interpretations and labellings in modern research literature derived their name to begin with (even though coins were mass production items and their images and legends easily copied by means of coin-dies). Even if we would take the most common motif from coinage, the emperor in *dextra elata* gesture, we found great motif difference in Roman state reliefs.

So marking the emperor's entry into town certainly was not the sole concern conveyed in those state reliefs assumed to portray *adventus*-scenes. Here again it seems to be the whole set of ideas affiliated with public expectations of Imperial rulership that was being transmitted through the depictions, as in coinage, but with the amplified means of large scale relief sculpture. And this again calls for why state reliefs show different scenes that can be connected with iconographic renditions of *adventus*. The differences in both state reliefs and coinage show that it was neither the Imperial entry nor any particular Imperial virtue that was to be featured and recognised on these images alone, but a pool of – to some extent rather ambiguous – ideas expressing different Imperial qualities and virtues that were variably stressed by using diverse iconographies.

⁴⁵ Cf. esp. *Ios. bell. Iud.* 7.71 (entry of Vespasian); *Eus. vit. Const.* 1.39 (*adventus* of Constantinus I). For further testimonia see supra note 3 on page 100.

To label such scenes with single slogans (such as VIRTUS, CLEMENTIA, PIETAS etc.) severely curtails the pictorial meaning repositied in the images of Roman state art. So rather than simplifying the understanding of such scenes, the modern trend of paraphrasing the image's meaning by catchwords taken from coinage legends tends to conceal deeper meanings of the iconography employed. Coinage bearing the legend ADVENTVS (and correspondingly PROF(ECTIO), too) should be valued as a prime example for identifying mechanisms of how meaning is produced in Roman state art. They belong to a comparatively small group of coins provided with legends not referring to Imperial virtues (such as VIRTUS, PIETAS, CLEMENTIA) but essentially to Imperial activity (such as ADLOCUTIO, EXPED(ITIO), CONG(IARVM)).

The case of ADVENTVS-issues shows that it was not an explicit rendition of Imperial activity that was intended to be displayed, but that different motifs could be combined with that legend – motifs that appear in earlier and contemporary coinage-issues with different legends (among them some linking them with Imperial virtues such as VIRTUS and VICTORIA and others linking them with expectations towards Imperial rule as SPES PVBLICA and GLORIA ROMANORVM). This clearly marks that these images can neither be fully explained by slogans referring to the 'historical activity' (adventus, profectio), nor to Imperial virtues (virtus, victoria) or public expectations (SPES PVBLICA, GLORIA ROMANORVM). So rather than explaining images through coin-legends, the interpretation of Roman state art would benefit from approaches that take a closer look at the precise iconography chosen, its composition, style, the figures, their attributes, and the *realia* shown. It is these details that add specific meaning to the more or less standardised imagery of Roman state art (emperor haranguing troops or citizens, administrative processes such as debt relief or distribution of money, battle, sacrifice, political affairs with opponents or foreign leaders, triumphal or solemn processions etc. etc.).

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Abbreviations of ancient authors and texts are according to The Oxford Classical Dictionary.

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| BMCRE VI | R. A. G. Carson, ed. (1962). <i>Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum</i> . Vol. VI. Severus Alexander to Balbinus and Pupienus. London, 1962. |
| EAA | <i>Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica, Classica e Orientale</i> . |
| LIMC | <i>Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae</i> . |
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